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ABSTRACT

This newsletter theme issue describes a state-local team partnership model for interagency transition efforts for young adults with deaf-blindness. Excepts from a presentation by Jane M. Everson identify key aspects and characteristics of effective state and local interagency partnerships. These include: (1) strategies for initiating and organizing teams; (2) the importance of confirming team membership; (3) strategies for conducting local needs assessments; (4) usefulness of value and mission statements; (5) the importance of developing team structures and operational procedures; (6) strategies for fostering team effectiveness; (7) outcomes attained by focusing on individuals; (8) strategies for maintaining a team's direction and focus; (9) strategies for developing and implementing action plans; and (10) the importance of monitoring and evaluating a team's effectiveness. Characteristics of an effective group are listed. The task behaviors that are necessary to help accomplish action steps and the maintenance behaviors to ensure health team cohesiveness are also identified. A strategy is described for assessing and building the commitment level of team members, and information is provided on how to set goals and objectives and evaluate outcomes of a team. (CR)

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HELEN KELLER NATIONAL CENTER

HKNC TAC NEWS

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER

VOLUME 9, NUMBER 1 — *Supporting the Transition of Youths who are Deaf-Blind* — FINAL ISSUE, 1996

HOW STATE AND LOCAL INTERAGENCY PARTNERSHIPS WORK

HKNC-TAC has long championed interagency transition efforts for young adults with deaf-blindness. For the past decade TAC has worked alongside interagency teams at all levels–state, regional, local–to enhance collaborative undertakings aimed at delivering transition services tailored to meet the needs of individuals who are deaf-blind as they move from educational settings to adult life.Over time, TAC's work with a great number and variety of interagency teams evolved into a new design for interagency efforts, one that stressed a partnership model for achieving collaborative successes. This "State and Local Interagency Partnership Model" was introduced in 1991.

The Partnership Model

The state-local team partnership model uses a state-level interagency team as a focal point. This team develops it own value and mission statement, endorses a case study approach to individualized transition planning, and uses action planning as a key element in its operating structure. More important, it makes a commitment to identify and work with from two to four local level teams and agrees to oversee and maintain these teams over a predetermined period of time, usually two to three years.

The state-level team itself does not focus on case studies but rather facilitates teamwork on case studies locally. It assists local teams in developing case studies, overcoming barriers and obstacles, and solving problems. The goal is to bring about systems change from the bottom up, including the development of model sites and identification of *best practices* as case study individuals make the transition into postsecondary education, employment, living and recreation settings.

This model of interagency collaboration may not be applicable or necessary in every state. However, it is one means by which states and localities can begin to address the complex issues and challenges facing transition-age individuals who are deaf-blind.

Some Interesting Findings

In March of1996, in Baltimore, Maryland, TAC sponsored a gathering of states that implemented this design, in order to facilitate the exchange of shared experiences with this model. This section of the newsletter will highlight some of the more interesting findings noted at the conference, an action-oriented workshop where experiences were compared, successes celebrated, and challenges for the future identified.

At this March, 1996 *cohort* meeting of states involved in partnership efforts, Dr. Jane M. Everson, the former Director of HKNC-TAC, offered a keynote address. Her remarks identified many of the key aspects and characteristics of effective state and local interagency partnerships. Excerpts from her address begin on the next page.

This special edition of the HKNC-TAC newsletter was edited and written in part by Dr. Patricia Rachal, HKNC-TAC Interagency Consultant.

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HKNC-TAC's purpose is to provide national training and technical assistance to education programs and adult agencies providing school-to-adult-life transition services to youth who are deaf-blind.

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Dr. Patricia Rachal

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"What Are We Learning About

This presentation was given by Jane M. Everson, Ph.D. in March of 1996 to members of a state and local team partnership.

Since its establishment in 1984, HKNC-TAC has provided technical assistance to states which focus on interagency collaboration and partnerships among the key agencies responsible for transition services for young adults who are deaf-blind. In 1991, we introduced a new technical assistance model called "The State and Local Team Partnership." Michigan was the first state to become involved with this new technical assistance model. In 1992, nine additional states joined and in 1993, seven more states expressed interest in applying the model to their states' interagency efforts.

This model differed from earlier HKNC-TAC efforts in two major ways: it emphasized the development of partnerships between state-level and local or regional-level teams, and it afforded us an opportunity to implement the model in both a systematic and flexible manner across multiple states, representing diverse geographical, cultural, economic, and political challenges. We have implemented the model—successfully and unsuccessfully—with a total of 17 states and more than 55 teams. Our understanding of the complex nature of interagency services has deepened as a result. As our understanding has deepened, so has our belief in the salient characteristics of the model.

In 1996, even with an uncertain future in education and rehabilitation services, we have much to celebrate. *First, the model works.* Effective partnerships result in changes in systems and in the lives of consumers. We know with certainty the developmental milestones states experience when implementing the model. We know the characteristics that differentiate highly effective teams from less effective teams. We know the activities that enhance team maintenance, model expansion, as well as that elusive and much discussed concept, *systems change.*

Second, we have demonstrated the model with a low-incidence population. But we have also demonstrated adaptation and infusion of the model with many states' general frameworks for, and models of, transition services. In a very real sense, we have demonstrated an effective transition model, one that achieves success with young adults who are deaf-blind, but one which is not perceived as a *deaf-blind model* only. Thus, we are well-positioned to continue adoption, maintenance, and expansion of the model in the larger realm—that of transition services to all individuals, regardless of disability label.

Key Aspects of Interagency Partnerships

Ten salient aspects of the model which have been mapped from all the information and experiences shared with us over the past five years are identified below. It may also help to think of these aspects as developmental in nature.

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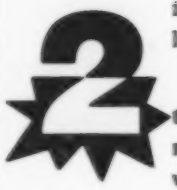
State and Local Interagency Patnerships?"

B.W. Tuckman (*Psychological Bulletin*, 63, "Developmental Sequences in Small Groups," pp. 384-399, 1965) notes that teams go through four stages of development: *forming, storming, norming, and performing*. We have found these stages evident in your partnership teams.

FIRST, Strategies for Initiating and Organizing Teams: This is part of the *forming* stage. Regardless of whether a team is being initiated at a state, regional, or local level, we have found that external forces (for example, HKNC-TAC technical assistance or 307.11 project objectives) have far greater chances of success if the key stakeholders evidence some driving force toward action-oriented teaming. *Agencies and organizations have to want to form teams.* At a minimum, individuals from critical agencies—education and rehabilitation—have to want to form teams. This driving force appears to be more important than any mandates or financial incentives. Involving key stakeholders from the beginning, especially parents and individuals with disabilities, also increases the likelihood of a team being initiated. Teams that agree to spend three to four meetings organizing themselves are more likely to be maintained and more likely to see changes in both systems and consumers.



SECOND, The Importance of Confirming Team Membership: This is the beginning of the *storming* stage. All state-level teams found it necessary to discuss membership and define roles during this three to four meeting organizational period.States that dropped the model within the first six months were unable to finalize the membership of a state team and/or were unable to determine how the team would relate to other, already existing, state-level teams. *Local or regional teams also found it necessary to spend time defining the roles of individual team members and found it helpful to review their membership periodically.* All teams experienced turnover, but those with the clearest team structures and operational procedures appear to have weathered their membership changes with the fewest difficulties. During the first year of model implementation, it is critical to maintain consistent leadership.

THIRD, Strategies for Conducting Local Needs Assessments: Every state that implemented the model did so because one or more of the team initiators was able to *identify a need for enhanced transition services.* This need was the driving force that led to team initiation.But the most effective partnerships also found it helpful to spend time further assessing and defining the need. For example, personnel training needs were assessed through:

- surveys and focus groups of families and consumers,
- summarizing personal futures planning maps,
- assessing "model" sites and best practices with quality indicator checklists,
- reviewing IEP/transition plans.

These data enabled teams to design and provide appropriate training.

FOURTH, Usefulness of Value and Mission Statements: All teams were given structured technical assistance to help articulate value and mission statements. The most effective teams used their statements to guide and monitor partnership activities. They wrote their statements on letterhead; they posted them during meetings; they shared written copies

"What Are We Learning About

of them with new team members; they referred to them during goal-setting and problem-solving activities. *Repeatedly, discussions with teams have reinforced the critical importance of taking time at the outset to develop, discuss, and adopt mutually agreed-upon value and mission statements.*

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FIFTH, The Importance of Developing Team Structures and Operational Procedures: All teams were provided with structured technical assistance to help *define roles for chairs/co-chairs and to help identify meeting effectiveness strategies.* Written job descriptions and agreed-upon term limits were especially helpful. *Teams which developed a set of operating procedures encountered fewer problems.* Teams which adopted meeting-effectiveness strategies such as structured agendas with timelines, meeting minutes, *kaizen* self-assessments (see *Monitoring Progress and Evaluating Outcomes*), *goals-roles-process* techniques, and *action-planning* appeared to be more effective.

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SIXTH, Strategies for Fostering Team Effectiveness: *Teams willing to engage in team-building (for example, value and mission statement development, team member role clarification, communication skills training, problem-solving exercises) were in a better position to achieve success.*State teams offered varying degrees of support and mentoring to local teams, for example, by having state team member *liaisons* attend local/regional team meetings and/or having local/regional teams members attend state team meetings. Partnerships with the strongest degree of interaction appear most effective. Partnerships in which state teams were perceived by local/regional teams as being both interested and knowledgeable were likely to be more effective than those in which knowledge, but not interest or commitment, was evident.

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Not surprisingly, teams which spent time together socializing before, during, and after meetings were most cohesive and thus more likely to be effective.

SEVENTH, Outcomes Attained by Focusing on Individuals: The *norming* stage occurred when teams were able to balance team maintenance needs and goals with systems and case study needs and goals. For most teams (at all levels) this takes between 15-24 months. The ability to focus on individuals was the first indicator of teams in this stage. This aspect was the one most likely to be questioned and even resisted during the norming and storming stages. States which at first attempted interagency activities without using a *case study* approach found their work easier and more effective once the partnership began focusing on individuals. *One of the most important things we learned about the model is this: partnerships which most fully embrace a case study approach are more effective in partnership maintenance, more effective in changing the lives of consumers, and more effective in working toward systems change.*

The typical case study takes six months to one year before positive impacts are realized for the individual. Successes appear to have less to do with the characteristics of the case study individual and more to do with other aspects of the partnership, especially maintaining consistent team membership, meeting frequently, utilizing an action-planning approach, etc. Concluding a case study could be tricky for some teams; those most successful used consumer-satisfaction with outcomes indicators, goal monitoring processes, and broader systems impact evaluations to measure achievement.

State and Local Interagency Patnerships?"

EIGHTH, Strategies for Maintaining a Team's Direction and Focus: All partnerships experienced the need to redefine and redirect their goals and activities. For many teams, this point came 15-24 months into implementation of the model.As *a result, we believe that a structured and annual team self-assessment is critical.* Adopting a *goals-roles-process* assessment, completing a *what are we learning map*, engaging in a *how are we doing activity* are ways to accomplish this. (See *Monitoring Progress and Evaluating Outcomes.*) Self-assessment appears to assist in maintaining direction and focus and can serve to re-energize team members, as successes are applauded and continuing challenges acknowledged.

NINTH, Strategies for Developing and Implementing Action Plans: The ability to utilize the final two strategies brings teams to the performing stage. *Structured action planning–the process and not a particular form–appears to be the primary indicator of highly effective teams.* All teams were provided technical assistance around action plan development. Suggestions included using flip-charts to record proposed actions throughout meetings, updating action plans at the beginning of each meeting, using action plan items to develop meeting agendas, and differentiating between *systems* goals and *case study* goals. Most teams readily adopted the concept of action planning, but teams which view their action plans as vehicles for attaining long-term and short-term goals–and not as ends in themselves–are more effective. In other words, effective teams use action plans to structure their meetings, to monitor and evaluate their activities, and to maintain a healthy balance between systems and case study goals.

TENTH, The Importance of Monitoring and Evaluating a Team's Effectiveness: *Every partnership needs to monitor and evaluate its activities and to have tools in place to accomplish these tasks.* State-level teams were more likely to identify this need than local/regional teams. For some partnerships the need was a result of grant writing and budget development activities. For other partnerships, it was the result of questions raised by agency heads. In still others, the questions were raised by local/regional teams. Once identified the need can be addressed in a number of ways. Tools include surveys of participants, support letters, compilation of case study vignettes, analysis of IEP/transition plans, documentation of qualitative and quantitative changes in consumers and/or services, and use of specific forms to chart and evaluate progress. Implementing a monitoring and evaluation process is most important, and the type of data collected will vary (although teams working in a partnership need to agree on what data are most important to collect and how best to share these data).

In sum, what are we learning about state and local partnerships?

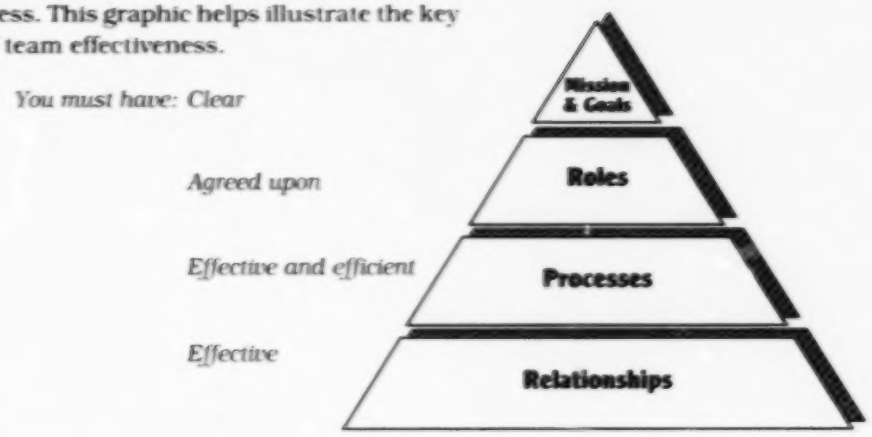
- They are effective in changing the lives of individuals and in changing systems.
- They are time-consuming and require hard work and commitment.
- They may be described by some defining or salient characteristics.
- They follow some predictable developmental milestones.
- And they can be fun.

On behalf of HKNC-TAC, thank you for allowing us to work with you and learn from you over the past years.

Addressing the Issue of

Managing Team Effectiveness

Planning is a key component for interagency team success. This graphic helps illustrate the key aspects of team effectiveness.



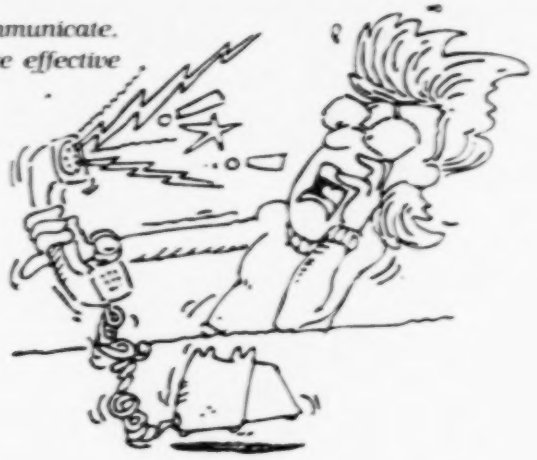
Characteristics of an Effective Group

- Clearly defined, measurable goals, shared by all members
- Clear roles and role expectations
- Agreed upon work processes
- Effective communication skills
- Ability to resolve issues, not to avoid them
- Contribution by all members
- Empowered membership
- Good listening skills
- Support and trust among members
- Energy and enthusiasm
- Ability to expand on one another's ideas
- Humor!
- Emotional investment in one another
- Consensus decision-making
- Effective leadership
- Ability to disagree
- Ability to take risks
- Willingness to evaluate effectiveness
- Ability to accept change and adapt to it
- Commitment to group and the actions decided upon

. . . COMMUNICATION

Successful Groups Need Both Task Behaviors and Maintenance Behaviors

There are many way to communicate, but some of them are more effective than others.



Task behaviors necessary to help accomplish action steps:

- Proposing and expanding
- Seeking information: the facts
- Reflecting
- Giving information
- Testing for understanding
- Disagreeing (without attacking!)
- Summarizing
- Consensus-building

And . . . Maintenance behaviors to ensure healthy team cohesiveness:

- Ground rules
- Feedback and conflict resolution skills
- Collaboration skills
- Timekeeping skills
- Systematic problem-solving process
- Systematic group reassessment

(These two pages are courtesy of The O'Neil Group, Inc., Simsbury, CT and may not be duplicated without their permission.)

Addressing the Issue of . . . COMMITMENT

COMMITMENT is an issue for all types of teams. It is especially critical for interagency teams because of all the other *jobs and responsibilities* team members carry. Building commitment boils down to two key aspects: motivation and ownership. How do we motivate people, how do we get participants to feel ownership? Developing common and mutually-agreed to values, mission and goals, along with using good communication skills are solid steps in this direction. When a team does face a *commitment* issue, utilizing the "Probing Questions Strategy" may help.

The Probing Questions Strategy

- Do we know why the non-committed are not committed?
- What happens as a result of NOT having commitment?
- Why are the non-committed persons part of the team? Is their participation or agency representation necessary and/or useful?
- Are we identifying, tapping into, and expanding their skills and interests?
- Do the non-committed find any of the team activities enjoyable? Could more activities be made more enjoyable for them?
- Was time spent motivating/selling ideas and goals to the non-committed?
- Who on the team is best at motivating/selling to the non-committed?
- Who has the best persuasive skills on the team?
- When ideas are presented, is sufficient time allowed for expansion, disagreement, and questions?
- Does the team actively seek consensus by asking such questions as:
  "Can you support this?"
  "Does anyone disagree?"
  "Are there other ideas?"

Remember, interagency teams must take the time both to develop commitment and maintain it!

The Nuts and Bolts of Ensuring Commitment

Start with ATTAINABLE, MEASURABLE GOALS
\+ PERIODIC SELF-EVALUATION
\+ MEMBERSHIP POLICY IN PLACE
\+ INTERACTIVE BEHAVIOR SKILLS
\+ PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS
\+ INTRODUCTORY MATERIALS FOR NEW MEMBERS
\+ BUILD ON MEMBERS' STRENGTHS AND VALUES
\+ CLEAR GOALS, ROLES, PROCESS

= COMMITMENT

9 (Patricia Rachal & Janet Steveley, HKNC-TAC)

Addressing the Issue of . . . GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

All teams must assess their success in relation to the goals they set. The goal-setting process is one of the most important aspects of interagency work. Experience suggests that the following four factors constitute a useful *litmus* test for establishing goals that will provide the most beneficial outcomes.

Goals are:

CLEAR All members of the team understand the goals and the activities necessary to reach them; all team members have participated in developing the goals and agree with them.

MEASURABLE Are goals written so that team members will know when they have been achieved? Can the goal be compared to an *actual state of affairs* in the future?

ATTAINABLE Are goals achievable given the expertise, resources of the team, and the problem-solving tools accessible to it?

HAVE REALISTIC TIME FRAMES Are the timelines attached realistic given the scope and depth of acitivities identified?

(Patricia Rachal, Interagency Consulatnt, HKNC-TAC)

Test Your Skills!

Measure these objectives against the four-step *litmus test* noted above:

1. MEDICINE: You have been provided with a razor blade, a piece of gauze, and a bottle of scotch. Remove your appendix. Do not suture until your work has been inspected. You have 15 minutes.
2. MUSIC: Write a piano concerto. Orchestrate and perform it with flute and drum. You will find a piano under your seat.
3. ENGINEERING: The disassembled parts of a high-powered rifle are on your desk. You will find an instructional manual, printed in Swahili. In 10 minutes, a hungry Bengal tiger will be admitted to the room. Take whatever action you feel appropriate. Be prepared to justify your decision.

ARE GOALS CLEAR?	___ yes	___ no
MEASURABLE?	___ yes	___ no
ATTAINABLE?	___ yes	___ no
DO THEY HAVE REALISTIC TIME FRAMES?	___ yes	___ no

(Source: J. Newstrom & E. Scannell, Games Trainers Play, McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1980.)

More . . . GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Reaching clear, measurable, attainable goals with realistic time frames can be at times a frustrating task. The following guide may help:

Procedures to Monitor Progress

From time to time, teams benefit from stepping back and engaging in an exercise aimed at reviewing what's working and what's not in their efforts to reach goals. Here is one approach.

A Problem Solving Approach

STEP 1. Identify the excuses for not attaining goals.
STEP 2. Prioritize your team's top three excuses.
STEP 3. Identify strategies to rid yourselves of "yeah, but," and other deterrents to success!:

In practice, this excercise may produce results like these!

Step 1: Excuses for Not Reaching Goals:

1. Funding needed and not there;
2. "Team goals" were really individual agency goals;
3. Contact person needed to do my task not around/not enough time for me;
4. The weather!
5. Attendance poor at meetings;
6. Broader systems barriers stymied us;
7. Lack of support services (e.g., interpreters);
8. "I forgot!" (To do my task, come to the meeting, etc);
9. Poor, lack of, or misconstrued communication;
10. "Somebody else messed up;"

Step 2: The Top Three Excuses:

1. The "somebody else [should have done it]" syndrome.
2. Time/workload/attendance issues.
3. Issues are bigger than we are!

Step 3: Strategies to Rid Ourselves of Excuses:

1. You have to persevere! Explore other options; brainstorm; move up the hierarchy, e.g., get higher-ups to talk to their counterparts in another agency; have the state team use its resources to problem solve.
2. Establish meeting times in advance; develop and use operational procedures, develop a membership policy; engage in flexible scheduling; look at alternative ways of meeting; send action plans out again between meetings as a reminder of tasks agreed to; have team engage in a commitment exercise.
3. Identify new players; break the issue down into different, more manageable steps; work at finding loopholes; engage in problem-solving exercises; "widen the network" by calling on people elsewhere in the state, other states, TAC, etc;, use the media to advance your cause.
4. Have the clearest of goals, agreed to by all and review! Use team self-assessment, commitment, and goal evaluation tools.

(Patricia Rachal, Interagency Consulatnt, HKNC-TAC)

Addressing the Issue of . . .
MONITORING PROGRESS AND EVALUATING OUTCOMES

Monitoring progress and evaluating outcomes are key to interagency team success. Addressing the questions noted below will assist teams in developing an approach that will lead to an assessment of progress made toward goals and an evaluation of accomplishments.

1. What materials, information, tools will we need?
2. Who will gather the information? (Roles of local, regional and state teams?)
3. Who will compile it into a report?
4. What will be done with the reports? How will they be used? To what ends?

Too much paperwork can stall your efforts.

One format that doesn't overwhelm teams with lots of paper/reports/details is outlined below.

EVALUATING SUCCESSES

Impact of goals on consumers and systems:

1.

2.

3.

Why this partnership allowed the above to happen:

1.

2.

3.

The nature of technical assistance delivered:

1. To whom:
2. Content:
3. Number of people assisted:
4. Next steps:

An example of how this format of evaluating outcomes can be used.

EVALUATING SUCCESSES

Impact of goals on consumers and systems:

1. *Identified 2 state-wide issues; developed action plans.*
2. *Helped 4 teams develop forms to meet IDEA requirements.*
3. *Assisted 5 teams in involving adult services prior to age 18.*

Why this partnership allowed the above to happen:

1. *Two teams provided training and TA to 3 sites.*
2. *Utilized state personnel of key agencies involved.*
3. *Used problem-solving mechanisms .*

The nature of technical assistance delivered:

1. To whom: *State/Regional/IEP teams*
2. Content: *Transition planning & team building*
3. Number of people assisted: *30 - 35*
4. Next steps: *To complete action plans*

To test effectiveness of new transition forms

(Patricia Rachal, Interagency Consulatnt, HKNC-TAC)

The Interagency Partnership Model:

Monitoring and Evaluating Goals and Activities

The following form can be used to track progress toward goals while also providing a simple means of noting accomplishments.

GOAL:	TIMELINE:	MONITORING /EVALUATION PROCEDURES:	COMPLETED (Y/N) DATE
ACTIVITIES:			

Here is one example of how the form can be used:

GOAL: *To utilize case studies to identify strengths and gaps in service delivery to effect systems change*	TIMELINE:	MONITORING /EVALUATION PROCEDURES:	COMPLETED (Y/N) DATE
ACTIVITIES: *1. Identify 2 to 3 case study individuals.*	*Fall, 1996*	*1. Names obtained;* *2. Appropriate permission granted*	*Yes/Sept. 1996*
2. Collect appropriate info to understand desired transition outcomes and needed support.	*Dec. 1996*	*1. Copies of IEPs/transition plans/maps* *2. Use map summary sheets for patterns/ recommendations*	*Yes/Dec. 1996*
3. Review info to identify strengths and weaknesses in service delivery system.	*Jan. 1997*	*1. "What are we learning map."* *2. "What's working; what's not."* *3. Kaizen*	
4. Prioritize and develop strategies to close two to three major gaps as identified.	*Jan. 1997*	*1. Develop action plan* *2. Set new goals based on new information*	
5. Disseminate problem solving strategies and solutions to appropriate local/regional/state personnel.	*Spring 1997*	*1. "What are we learning" maps/reports* *2. Presentations* *3. Articles/E-mail* *4. Vignettes of focus person*	
6. Document and share state-wide hurdles and any successful solutions to successful transition with appropriatelocal/state/regional personnel.	*Spring 1997*	*1. Written assessments to state team* *2. "Final Reports"* *3. Vignettes of focus person to state team*	

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How Well Does It Work?

Team Self Review

Questions to guide the Team Self-Review:

GOALS	Do we agree with the mission statement? Are our goals measurable? Will we know when we've reached them? Do our goals reflect our values? Have we scheduled time to review them?
ROLES	Are the roles of the co-chairs clear? Is there an assigned minute-taker? Is there a timekeeper? Are various roles rotated?
PROCESS	Does the schedule of meetings meet our needs? Is the meeting location agreeable to everyone? Is an agenda developed for the next meeting at the end of each meeting? How has the team implemented the "case study approach?"

USE A KAIZEN CHART TO RECORD ANSWERS

GOALS	
+	Kaizen
Things that are going well:	Opportunities for improvement:

A Sample of What We are Learning

CASE STUDIES	REGION/LOCAL COMMUNITY	STATE ISSUES/SYSTEMS
1. Participation of Jason and his family is critical.	• Transition plans must be person-centered.	• State Policy to ensure student/family presence.
2. Jason received a diploma too early (at age 18): made him ineligible for continued services through the school system.	• IEP teams did not address full transition services. • Families may be unaware of implications of accepting a diploma.	• Training, monitoring dissemination of *best practices* in IEP development, transition planning.
3. Confusion about which adult agency would serve Jason (VR or Services for the Blind).	• Which agency needs to be identified early on. • Need for collaboration between two VR agencies.	• Existing policy on *lead agency* needs to be reviewed/revised.
4. Jason needs continued medical support at home after age of 21.	• Team needed to learn more about Medicaid Waivers. • Jason (and others) ineligible for current Medicaid Waiver programs.	• Need to work toward modifying existing waiver services or creating new waiver services.

(Patricia Rachal and Janet Steveley, HKNC-TAC)

The Interagency Partnership Model

Below are examples of responses to an informal poll of those who have participated in, and experienced, the trials and tribulations of interagency partnership efforts. The responses reproduced here are chosen because they reflect the themes most commonly voiced.

1. What is the BIGGEST accomplishment achieved through the interagency partnership effort in your state?

"We are truly 'collaborating' as a team: we meet; we share; we talk; we have really come together as a team working toward common ends."

"We have created a state/local provider partnership—it's not perfect, but it is in place where one did not exist before—a milestone for this state."

"We've managed to bring people together from across the state from different departments, agencies and advocacy groups to work as one. We have an agreed-upon commitment to work toward the preferred outcomes for youth with deaf-blindness. This network has been instrumental in addressing other webs of issues for kids of all ages and with disabilities other than deaf-blindness."

"The coordination of efforts made it possible for more co-funding from agencies and a willingness to say, 'Let's share—I'll pay for this, if you pay for that.' This type of creative funding wasn't happening before this partnership."

2. What were the one or two key factors that were most important in helping your team coalesce?

"Letting go of the negatives: 'No, I couldn't possibly do THAT,' and all of our turf issues. Agreeing to focus on consumers and to have that focus drive our effort."

"Putting individual/agency goals aside; being open and honest enough to agree on common goals and values; recognizing it takes TIME to form and develop trust in our team effort–even up to a year! Don't give up! You have to live through the process to get to successes."

"Above all else, take time to establish your mutual values and goals and define roles as clearly as possible; you must have parents and consumers involved!"

"We came together to focus on meeting individual consumer needs and to find ways to solve problems. We saw we needed each other—parents, consumers, professionals."

3. If you are called upon by a group of individuals considering forming an interagency team for the very first time, and you could offer only ONE piece of advice or wisdom, what would it be?

"Be proactive and open, and above all, keep your sense of humor!"

"Be flexible! Put your own agenda to the side."

"Take the time to agree on mutual value/mission statements at the outset. In retrospect, it was the most important thing we did."

"Remember that through this effort you can have a positive impact on kids' lives—use what's there to have an impact."

"An interagency partnership means releasing the *I* and replacing it with a *we*. Be prepared to do that and to develop commitments to a person-centered approach and stick to it!"

"Work hard to maintain the stability and commitment of your core group. Don't let the group get too large!"

4. What do you see as the future of the interagency partnership in your state?

"We see the creation of new regional teams and the expansion of existing teams; we see the role of the state team diminishing to be more reactive to problems and challenges brought to it by those closer to the issues that impact directly on consumers."

"The expansion of our teams to include new players to cover more of our consumers; to continue the work of building better and more effective relationships among those of us already involved."

"We have 'high hopes!' We are more aware of mistakes and flaws in how we interact and are reorganizing our teams so we can be more effective."

"We are finally at a place where we can focus on the *glitches* in the system. We want to look at evaluation data, find the common threads, find where people are falling through the cracks and resolve these issues."

Looking Ahead: The National Technical Assistance Consortium for Children and Youths who are Deaf-Blind

Overview of the Proposed Project

Teaching Research of Western Oregon State College and the Helen Keller National Center in Sands Point, New York, submitted a proposal to the federal government to jointly provide technical assistance on behalf of children and youth who are deaf-blind. Individually these two agencies, through TRACES and HKNC-TAC, have delivered and coordinated national, regional, state and local level technical assistance for children who are deaf-blind for nearly twelve years. TRACES and HKNC-TAC have formed the National Technical Assistance Consortium for Children and Youths Who Are Deaf-Blind (NTAC).

The purpose of this new project is: first, to assist states to improve the quality of existing placements and services for individuals (birth through young adulthood) who are deaf-blind;and second, to increase the number of children/young adults, their families, and their service providers who will benefit from these services. This partnership combines the vast resources and expertise of two national projects into one unified and collaborative project.

The NTAC project is designed to provide a national effort of training/technical assistance to 307.11 grantees, state education agencies, Part H head agencies, and adult service agencies in order to promote and support statewide infrastructures through long range planning and collaborative partnerships. To accomplish this effort, seven major objectives have been proposed, which include:

1. To assist state and multi-state 307.11 grantees and critical stakeholders to identify service needs across the age ranges and to develop long range, state technical assistance (TA) plans;
2. To implement "State-Local Team Partnerships" for establishing coordinated, family and person centered services for infants through transition-age children and young adults who are deaf-blind;
3. To provide technical assistance (TA) to public and private agencies, institutions, and organizations that are responsible for: 1) infant and toddler services; 2) preschool services; 3) educational and related services; and 4) transitional services to establish effective practices that increase local services and personal capacity;
4. To provide technical assistance (TA) to parents and family members to inform, empower, and develop skills in advocating for and participating in effective service systems for the family member who is deaf-blind;
5. To provide technical assistance (TA) to young adults who are deaf-blind to facilitate self-advocacy and self-determination;
6. To develop a nationwide database on the demographic characteristics of infants through young adults who are deaf-blind;
7. To provide planning and managerial support for the annual meeting in Washington, DC for project directors and/or their designees of projects servicing children and young adults who are deaf-blind.

Project objectives will be carried out using an array of TA activities that will be designed to build statewide infrastructures by increasing the capacity of agencies and organizations, families, and individuals who are deaf-blind.

IN MEMORY

MARY O'DONNELL was a key player in parent advocacy and interagency efforts spanning two decades. She was active in the original interagency efforts sponsored by HKNC-TAC in her home state of New Jersey, and she was an influential figure in these efforts and in her parent/family advocacy efforts both on a state and national level. Mary was well-known for her leadership, especially as President of The National Family Association of Deaf-Blind (NFADB). Her dedication, determination, and energy will be sorely missed. Yet, her voice and guiding touch will be with us as we move forward in the cause of enhancing the quality of life for persons with deaf-blindness—a cause so dear to her heart, and one she so fully embraced.

Here are just a very few of the ways her friends and colleagues remember her:

"Fiercely determined" "Classy and committed"
"A heart so big you could not help but be warmed by it"
"A sly and wonderful wit"
"A superb leader, one who chose to lead by her deeds"
"A tireless and empathetic worker"

Simply, and with love to Mary: One individual who tried to make a difference and did.

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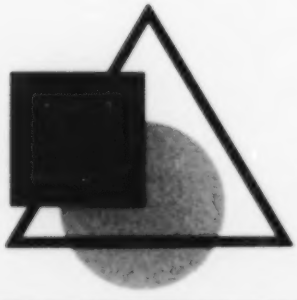

"Every human being has undeniable rights which, respected, render happiness possible—the right to live his own life as far as may be, to choose his own creed, to develop his capacities . . ." **Helen Keller**

TAC NEWS

September 1996

Dear Readers:

This will be the final edition of HKNC-TAC News. TAC will officially go out of business on September 30, 1996 to be replaced by a new and exciting project, **The National Technical Assistance Consortium for Children and Young Adults Who Are Deaf-Blind (NTAC)**. We feel the topic we have chosen for this newsletter is especially appropriate. During the past 12 years, we have identified state and local interagency efforts as critical in the provision of comprehensive transition services. This newsletter highlights and summarizes the key elements that we found to be necessary for successful interagency collaboration.

Over the years, through this newsletter, we have attempted to address the many aspects of transition services for young adults who are deaf-blind. Past topics have included parents and families, communication, assistive technology, personal futures planning, and others. The scope of the TAC project has been broad and is not easily summarized. However, since this is our last publication, we hope you will afford us a moment or two to reflect on where we have been and what we have tried to accomplish.

A LOOK BACK . . .

In 1984 transition services were first identified as a national initiative for all youth with disabilities. The Helen Keller National Center responded by submitting a proposal that called for a national technical assistance project to work with educational programs and adult service agencies providing or proposing to provide transition services for youth who are deaf-blind. Not surprisingly, an evolution and maturation in thought and practice has taken place over the past twelve years. In our early stages we defined our technical assistance by answering questions such as:

- *What is transition?*
- *What best practices are inherent in the delivery of transition services?*
- *What are the roles and responsibilities of professionals and parents?*

By 1986, as a result of a significant amount of technical assistance, there existed an increased awareness leading to new and more advanced technical assistance questions and issues:

- *Can proven successful transition models for youth with severe disabilities be extended to youth who are deaf-blind?*
- *Is an interagency team approach a useful model for addressing systemic education and adult service issues?*
- *How can parents and families be mobilized and supported?*
- *Can youth who are deaf-blind live and work in local communities, using traditional and/or supported employment/living models?*

It was a time to move beyond the provision of general information and questions and to respond to the challenge of applying *best practices* in transition services to youth who were deaf-blind.

The period of 1986 to 1989 saw a flurry of technical assistance activity involving the emergence of state-local interagency teams, state wide parent organizations, product development and topic-specific technical assistance. By 1989, HKNC-TAC was established as a key resource for professionals and parents concerned with transition services. Agency and youth outcome data was beginning to emerge on young adults with deaf-blindness in supported employment sites, community living models and postsecondary employment. At this time, TAC recognized the need to address even more complex transitions issues—while continuing to provide *best practices* training to professionals and parents. These issues included:

- *What are the specific national and regional needs of professionals and parents serving or proposing to serve youth who are deaf-blind?*

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- *What are the salient characteristics of successful state-level interagency teams of professionals and parents addressing transition services for youth?*
- *What are the organizational characteristics of parent/family groups addressing the transition services of youth?*
- *What are the outcomes and benefits experienced by trainees and youth directly and indirectly served by HKNC-TAC?*

Between 1989 and 1992, HKNC-TAC focused on continuing interagency and parent activities. New topics included Personal Futures Planning, innovative funding for community living opportunities, and IEP/statement of transition services development. Work with state level interagency teams expanded, as did the number of statewide parent organizations and topic-specific technical assistance activities. The project also conducted a national needs assessment of over 700 agencies serving individuals with deaf-blindness.

By 1990, transition services were a mandated component of educational programming for all youth with disabilities, and several states were beginning to implement federally funded state-wide systems change projects. Agency and youth outcome data were yielding data on nearly 50 programs and 100 deaf-blind youth in postsecondary education, employment and community living opportunities. In the final four years of the project, HKNC-TAC has maintained its focus on the most current and challenging transition issues. These are:

- *What forms and processes are used nationally to develop IEP/statements of transition services for youth who are deaf-blind?*
- *To what extent are educational and transition* best practices *incorporated within individualized transition planning?"*
- *What are the most common systemic barriers and successes faced by state- and local-level interagency teams?*
- *How do we best monitor progress and evaluate transition outcomes for youths who are deaf-blind?*

HKNC-TAC has continued to provide topical technical assistance in such areas as individualized transition planning, consumer self-advocacy and assistive technology. Work continued with over 20 statewide parent organizations, including the National Family Association for the Deaf-Blind. Two special publications resulted from the provision of technical assistance to personnel from thirty-one single or multi deaf-blind state projects: a monograph of transition *best practices* for deaf-blind youth; and a national analysis of 51 randomly selected IEP/statements of transition services. *Supporting Young Adults Who Are Deaf-Blind in Their Communities: A Transition Planning Guide for Service Providers, Families and Friends*, edited by Dr. Jane Everson, was published by Paul H. Brookes Publishing Company in 1995. During this time, TAC also developed and implemented the State and Local Team Partnership Model—the topic of this issue.

We can't close without thanking those of you who contributed
so much to the success of this project.
To the parents and family members who guided us,
the professionals and paraprofessionals in the field who supported us and
the transitioning youth who inspired us,
we offer our sincere thanks.
And we look forward to working with each and every one of you
under our new name . . .
NTACI

This overview of HKNC-TAC was adapted from materials written by Dr. Jane Everson, former Director of the HKNC-TAC Project.

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